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Chairman Jim Oberstar of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee has recently advocated an increase in the gasoline tax by 5 cents per gallon dedicated to a new bridge repair fund.

Currently, you pay a federal gas tax of 18.4 cents per gallon each time you fill up. A majority of this tax is placed in the highway maintenance portion of the Highway Trust Fund, which is designed to maintain safe roads and bridges. However in recent years, Congress funneled some of this tax money directly into the general treasury even while transportation spending by the federal government increased from \$39 billion in 1996 to \$70 billion in 2006. That's a 77% increase over 10 years; far outgrowing the inflation rate or the growth rate in the overall federal budget.

Perhaps rather than rushing almost instinctively to create a new tax, Congress should examine the current spending priorities in transportation funding and get rid of wasteful Davis-Bacon laws requiring a "union wage", which can be up to 28% greater than the prevailing wage for federal government contracts. The federal government would then be free to competitively bid contracts that are better, more efficient, and less costly. The money saved can be applied to the necessary federal highway infrastructure improvements.